

Freedom of Information Act 2000 & Environmental Information Regs. 2004



Reference Number: INF003342

Request:

I
Dear FOI Officer,

I am submitting this Freedom of Information request under the FOI Act 2000 to demand full transparency and accountability from Medway Council regarding the demolition of the Aveling and Porter building in Strood—a historic site that played a vital role in the industrial heritage of Medway.

If Strood's heritage is genuinely valued and Medway Council's slogan "serving you" reflects a true commitment to listening to the concerns of its residents, then the actions surrounding the destruction of this building must be fully justified. This is not only a matter of historical preservation but also of public trust and accountability.

I demand immediate access to the following information:

Structural Reports & Surveys – Provide all reports and surveys regarding the condition of the Aveling and Porter building prior to its demolition. Medway Council stated the building was unsafe—this claim must be substantiated with detailed evidence, and the public has a right to see it.

Cost Assessments – The council claimed that repairs would cost £800,000. Provide a full breakdown of this estimate, including contractor quotes, cost projections, and any alternative repair or preservation options that were considered. If the financial viability of preserving the building was not fully explored, explain why.

Correspondence with English Heritage – Provide all communications between Medway Council and English Heritage regarding the building's listing status. Why was this building, which represented the area's industrial heritage, not afforded the protection it deserved?

Public Consultation & Objections – Provide records of all objections and public feedback submitted by residents, heritage groups, and other stakeholders. How did the council respond to these objections, and why were they disregarded in favour of demolition?

Feasibility Studies for Preservation – Provide any studies, reports, or proposals that explored alternatives to demolition, such as repurposing or preserving the building. If such studies were not undertaken, explain why.

Rebuilding the Historic Structure – Will the Aveling and Porter building be rebuilt or preserved in any form as part of the ongoing regeneration plans for the site? If not, explain why the potential for rebuilding this historic structure was not considered, especially in light of its significance to the local community.

If Medway Council truly values the heritage of Strood and aims to "serve" its residents, it must show respect for the history that shapes the community and engage in transparent decision-making. The public deserves to know why this important building was demolished and whether any efforts were made to preserve or rebuild it.

I expect a complete, unredacted response within the statutory 20 working days. Any failure to provide this information or unjustified delays will be referred to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for review.

Please provide the information in electronic format via email. If this request exceeds the cost limit, provide a

If you wish to receive further information in regards to this request or wish to submit a Freedom of Information Request please forward your request to freedom@medway.gov.uk or Information Governance Team, Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 4TR.

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breakdown of the costs and indicate which information can be provided within the limit.

I expect Medway Council to uphold its commitment to the public by providing a prompt and full response to this request.

Response:

Dear Mr Aubnoy,

We have reviewed your request, please see below links and attachments that have been located, in relation to your enquiry. I can direct you to the Cabinet minutes 5 June 2007

(<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=1352&Ver=4>) where the Strood Civic centre is deemed surplus to the Council's requirements.

In addition;

- 26 Feb 2009 Council minutes, where £400,000 was allocated for the demolition of the Civic Centre building
- 2 June 2009 Cabinet minutes, where an additional budget of £300,000 was agreed for other works associated with the demolition i.e. utility diversions
(<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?MID=737&RD=Minutes&DF=26%2f02%2f2009&A=0&R=0>)
- (<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=1393&Ver=4>).

Please find attached the correspondence with English Heritage.

The site has been declared surplus to council requirements and allocated in the emerging local plan for residential development. The council is reviewing disposal and delivery options currently, however given that the site will be used primarily for residential use it is not envisaged that the Aveling and Porter building will be rebuilt. A Planning application for the has been approved, with the design drawing upon the history of the site
(<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=360&MId=6006&Ver=4>). Condition 7 within the officer's Planning report is worth noting, it specifies the need for details of on-site historical interpretation, wayfinding and public art to be incorporated within the development to be submitted to Planning.

I trust this information is to your satisfaction, however, if you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to: Information Governance Manager, Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 4TR., or email freedom@medway.gov.uk.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

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